Declaration and Resolutions

OF THE

SOCIETY of UNITED IRISHMEN

OF *BELFAST.*

IN *the present great æra of reform, when unjust governments are falling in every quarter of Europe; when religious persecution is compelled to abjure her tyranny over conscience; when the rights of men are ascertained in theory, and that theory substantiated by practice; when antiquity can no longer defend absurd and oppressive forms against the common sense and common interests of mankind; when all government is acknowledged to originate from the people, and to be so far only obligatory as it protects their rights and promotes their welfare; We think it our duty, as Irishmen, to come forward, and state what we feel to be our heavy grievance, and what we know to be its effectual remedy.*

WE HAVE NO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT—*we are ruled by Englishmen, and the servants of Englishmen, whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption, and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and to subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the legislature.—Such an extrinsic power, acting with uniform force in a direction too frequently opposite to the true line of our obvious interests, can be resisted with effect solely by* unanimity, decision and spirit in the people,—*qualities which may be exerted most legally, constitutionally and efficaciously, by that great measure essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland—AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT.*

We do not here mention as grievances, the rejection of a place-bill, of a pension-bill, of a responsibility-bill, the sale of peerages in one house, the corruption publickly avowed in the other, nor the notorious infamy of borough traffick between both; not that we are insensible of their enormity, but that we consider them as but symptoms of that mortal disease which corrodes the vitals of our constitution, and leaves to the people, in their own government, but the shadow of a name.

Impreſſed with theſe ſentiments, we have agreed to form an aſſociation, to be called THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN: *and we do pledge ourſelves to our country, and mutually to each other, that we will ſteadily ſupport, and endeavour by all due means to carry into effect the following Reſolutions:*

First. *Reſolved, That the weight of Engliſh influence in the government of this country is ſo great, as to require a cordial union among* ALL THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND *to maintain that balance which is eſſential to the preſervation of our liberties and the extenſion of our commerce.*

Second. *That the ſole conſtitutional mode by which this influence can be oppoſed, is by a complete and radical reform of the repreſentation of the people in parliament.*

Third. *That no reform is practicable, efficacious or juſt, which ſhall not include* Iriſhmen *of every religious perſuaſion.*

Satisfied, as we are, that the inteſtine diviſions among Iriſhmen have too often given encouragement and impunity to profligate, audacious and corrupt adminiſtrations in meaſures which, but for theſe diviſions, they durſt not have attempted; we ſubmit our reſolutions to the nation, as the baſis of our political faith.

We have gone to what we conceive to be the root of the evil; we have ſtated what we conceive to be the remedy.—With a parliament thus reformed, every thing is eaſy; without it, nothing can be done: And we do call on and moſt earneſtly exhort our countrymen in general to follow our example, and to form ſimilar ſocieties in every quarter of the kingdom, for the promotion of conſtitutional knowledge, the abolition of bigotry in religion and politicks, and the equal diſtribution of the rights of man through all ſects and denominations of Iriſhmen. The people, w- thus collected, will feel their own weight, and ſecure that power which theory h already admitted as their portion, and which, if they be not arouſed by their pre provocations to vindicate it, they deſerve to forfeit their pretenſions FOR EVE

Signed by Order of the Society of United Iriſhmen of Belfaſt,

OCT. 1791. ROBERT SIMMS, Secretar